

people who disengage and drop out of school and, conversely, increasing the number of students who graduate from high school and go on to higher education or get a job in the workforce.

Because of the importance of improving high school performance, NCLB requires secondary schools to meet reading and math targets for all of its students that are established by the State—just like all public schools. However, secondary schools must also meet State-established graduation rate targets in order to meet the requirements of the law. The law also authorizes the School Dropout Prevention Program whose purpose is to provide grants to States and school districts to assist in the dropout prevention and school re-entry activities.

As several national studies have found, a staggering number of youth fail to graduate on time. For example:

About one-third of our students—approximately 1.23 million each year—leave high school without a diploma.

Black and Hispanic youth are more likely than non-Hispanic whites to drop out of high school. In 2005, 6 percent of non-Hispanic whites ages 16 to 24 were not enrolled in school and had not completed high school, compared with 11 percent of blacks and 23 percent of Hispanics.

A student's decision to drop out of school has long-term consequences that not only affect the individuals themselves, but the society at large:

Dropouts from the class of 2006 cost the nation more than \$309 billion in lost wages, taxes and productivity over their lifetimes.

If the nation's likely dropouts from the class of 2006 graduated, we could save more than \$17 billion in Medicaid and expenditures for uninsured care over the course of those young people's lifetimes.

If high schools and colleges raise the graduation rates of Hispanic, African-American and Native American students to the levels of white students by 2020, the potential increase in personal income would add more than \$320 billion to the U.S. economy.

Increasing the graduation rate and college matriculation of male students in the U.S. by just 5 percent could lead to combined savings and revenue of almost \$8 billion each year by reducing crime-related costs.

A high school diploma and further postsecondary education or training is critical in today's global economy. Dropouts are unlikely to have the minimum skills necessary to function in today's increasingly complex and technological workforce.

Graduation rates are a fundamental indicator that our nation's public schools are doing what they are intended to do: Enroll, engage and educate youth to be productive members of society.

However, there have been some concerns raised over the availability and quality of data on graduation and dropout rates and how they differ from State to State. This is based largely on whether the individual State has developed strong standards for its high schools. For example, even though NCLB has improved the reporting of data, a few States continue to have wide gaps in their data and can not accurately calculate graduation or dropout rates from 1993 to 2002.

To deal with this problem, yesterday, Secretary Spellings issued proposed federal regu-

lations to establish a uniform formula to calculate graduation rates. In particular, States would be required to adopt the formula, largely based on a rate agreed to by the National Governors Association, NGA, by 2012.

I agree with the Secretary that this must be done. Only by knowing how well or how poorly States, schools, and school districts are educating students can we ensure that every student receives an excellent education.

Mr. McKEON. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ALTMIRE). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. MURPHY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the 30-Something Working Group which the Speaker is a member of and I know will join us down here for an hour in the future, we hope to be joined later this evening by one of the senior members of the 30-Something Working Group, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK).

We come down to the House floor as some of the younger Members of the Democratic Caucus, and we try to do it every week to really focus in on how the issues affecting this Congress are specifically challenging younger families in this country. How the neglect of the past 12 years trying to be remedied by the new Democratic majority here are affecting those families that are just starting out, those issues maybe can be best talked about and best addressed by those of us who are the younger members of the House represented by the 30-Something Working Group.

We thank the Speaker for constituting the working group and allowing us to come down and share our thoughts.

It is remarkable as a first-term Member, Mr. Speaker, to see the transition of views and transformation of priorities and issues that you hear about as a first-term Member, going out and holding office hours as I do at supermarkets throughout my district, holding town hall meetings every week or 2 weeks throughout the district.

I remember back in February of 2007 when I held my first big, large town hall. It was a nerve-racking occasion as a first-term Member of Congress, and I remember thinking there was only one subject to hold that town hall meeting on, and that was the war in Iraq, dominating the conversation as it seemed to here on the floor of the House and in the halls of the United States Congress.

The President had proposed his new strategy to introduce 35,000 to 40,000 new troops into Iraq, clearly working against the will of the majority of the American people who had said all across this Nation in November 2006 that they wanted a new direction in Iraq.

And now fast forward a year later to town halls that I am holding, as well as other members of the 30-Something Working Group and Members on both sides of the aisle, and you hear a very different tune.

People are still talking about Iraq. The situation hasn't gotten any better, and you can make the very plausible argument that things have gotten worse in Iraq over the last year. Even as the surge has moved forward, the political willingness of the Iraqis to take control of their own country has moved backwards.

But what we are hearing very clearly from the mouths of our constituents in town hall meetings and office hours across this Nation is that there is economic trouble. There is trepidation on behalf of families throughout this country as to the economic future that they face as families and that our communities face going forward.

□ 2215

And it's real. The numbers are getting worse. The amount of homes facing foreclosures, the number of workers being laid off, even those people who have jobs finding that the salary increases they thought were coming are being postponed, the amount of overtime hours that they used to rely on, cut back, many more part time workers, more temporary workers.

I don't know, Mr. Speaker, whether we're in a recession or not. I'm not an economist. But I know that people are facing real trouble back in Connecticut, as they are throughout the rest of this country.

And I don't think it takes a rocket scientist on this floor or anywhere else in the country to figure out how we got here. You know, this isn't just about the jobs that are being lost. This isn't just about the themes are being foreclosed upon. This is about the fact that thousands of families, millions of families around this country and in the Fifth District of Connecticut have no more room in their budget to take any more hits.

Energy costs going up at a pace that families and seniors can't sustain; health care costs going up to the point where businesses celebrate when they hear that their premiums are only going to increase by 10 percent in a given year. You add that all together with an economic slowdown, and you put millions of families at risk throughout this country.

And it should be no surprise that we've gotten to the place that we are today because for 12 years, while our friends on the other side of the aisle controlled this House, while President Bush staked his claim to the White House, we have had absolute neglect when it comes to energy policy.

So the families throughout this country today are hurting, while oil companies are making record profits, record profits; not just for the oil industry, but for any company in the history of capitalism in this country, record profits for the oil companies, while we have

families hurting, paying more at the pump, paying more to heat their homes.

Health care policy is the same story. I mean, how long has it been that this Congress has been listening to the cries, to the pleas of families and businesses throughout this Nation to do something about the rising cost of health care?

And for 12 years of this Republican Congress, for 8 years now, almost 8 years of this Bush presidency, no relief on health care costs. While yet, at the same time, those that are making profits off the health care system, the insurance companies, the drug companies, continue to make enormous profits. Salaries for the CEOs of these companies spiral to new heights.

So people are doing pretty well when it comes to energy prices, people are doing pretty well when it comes to health care prices. It's just not consumers. It's just not our neighbors and our friends and our relatives. It's that lucky few who got to run the oil company, who got to run the drug company, who got to run the insurance company.

And we're trying to change things. But we're finding that it isn't easy without partners. It isn't easy without a Republican minority who actually wants to actually do something to change our economy. It's not so easy without a President who wants to come to the table and help us with health care policy.

And so we are in difficult economic times today. But we need a Congress working together. We need a President who's willing to come to the table.

Mr. Speaker, the facts speak for themselves here. On January 22, 2001, when the President was sworn into office, the price of a gallon of gasoline was about \$1.47. Today, 7 years later that price stands at \$3.53. In Connecticut you might be lucky today to find a gallon of gasoline at \$3.53. I think when I filled up my car this weekend, if I remember, it was up around the \$3.70 mark.

This is what you get, this is what you get when you give away \$16 billion of tax breaks to the oil companies. This is what you get when you refuse to make any investments in the types of alternative renewable energy sources that could wean this country off of gasoline. And this is what you get when, year after year after year, you perpetuate a foreign policy that destabilizes international oil markets in the Middle East and elsewhere.

It's no secret, it's no surprise that we're standing where we are today. This Democratic majority has inherited an utterly bankrupt national energy policy, and it is leading to the trouble that we have seen in American families today.

And the same thing goes for health care policy, Mr. Speaker. Again, I find it painfully humorous that 10 percent increases in premiums are to be celebrated around this country in our busi-

ness community. And what it has led to is too many businesses who want to do the right thing, who want to give health care to their employees, cutting them off, or forcing more of the cost on those employees; putting yet another economic burden on families all around this country.

This economic slowdown, once again, is not just about the subprime crisis. It's also about energy prices, it's also about health care costs. And for 12 years of this Congress, for 7 years of this presidency, no action on health care.

With one minor exception, right? You remember the 2003 Medicare Modernization Act. Well, it did a couple of things. First, it foisted a Medicare prescription drug benefit seniors, which drove millions of seniors around this country through the roof trying to figure out, amongst 40 or 60 or 80 different plans, which one they should sign up for; drove them through the roof even more once they got to the end of the year and realized that their coverage was going to run out on them when they entered that dreaded donut hole; and all the while, made another nice health profit for the insurance companies and drug companies that were in the room writing the bill with the Republican majority at the time.

That was our approach to health care, was to give a little bit to people in an utterly confusing and cruel program, which gives a lot to the folks that didn't need any more. That's pretty much the sum total of health care reform in this Congress before the Democrats took control.

And as we've tried to extend out health care, we have been met with almost uniform resistance from the Republicans and from the President, most significantly in our effort to try to extend health care to poor kids. Four million kids we could have covered with the health care State insurance bill that we tried to pass. We came, you know, depending on anybody's estimates, about six votes short here in the House of Representatives, to overturn the President's repeated vetoes.

That kind of health care coverage, reaching out and extending to a lot of working families out there. Remember, you're talking about $\frac{3}{4}$, maybe more of the 46 million uninsured out there are members of families in which you have a full-time worker. People are playing by the rules. They're doing everything we ask them to do, trying to make do in a tough economy, and yet they don't have any health care insurance. And that children's health care insurance bill that we tried to pass here as Democrats, and couldn't get cooperation from our friends across the aisle, that would have extended out benefits to four million more kids and, more importantly, four million more families, families that are doing everything we ask, playing by the rules, trying to survive and simply can't get health care to their kids.

Now, we know that they do get health care to their kids, because if

their child is sick, they might postpone getting them to the doctor, but compassionate parents all across this country will end up bringing their child down to the emergency room, will end up finding a doctor that will treat them. But they pay for all of that out of their pocket.

More bankruptcies in this country are caused by health care costs than any other cause that you can dream up. And so this economic slowdown is exacerbated by the increasing amount of health care costs that are pushed and burdened on families across this country.

Doing something about health care is doing something about the economy, just like doing something about energy prices is also about doing something for this economy.

But the other thing that I'm finding out, Mr. Speaker, as I'm walking around talking to constituents in the northwest section of Connecticut, is that the gig is up on the Republican and the President's ability to separate the war from the economy, because people are figuring out that they are totally linked together.

The fact that we are spending \$339 million a day, let me say that again, \$339 million a day on this war is taking food right out of the mouths of families here in this country, taking jobs effectively right out of the hands of American families.

Why is that? Imagine what we could have done if we could have taken the nearly \$1 trillion that we have spent on this war over the past 5 years, and invested it in growing new economies in this country, invested it in building new worker training programs so that individuals being phased out of old economy jobs could be transitioned into new economy jobs.

What if we took that money that we've been spending, \$330 million a day, and put that into new tax incentives for small businesses to grow their operations?

All of the things that we could have done with that money could have prevented the economic slowdown that we face today. They are absolutely linked together, the spending on this war, and the economic slowdown that we see today.

And part of this whole puzzle, and now you're getting into sort of high-minded economics that a non economist like me probably shouldn't be talking about. But we know also that the dollar is falling fast across this world, and is jeopardizing even further the soundness of our economy as our dollar gets weaker and weaker and weaker.

And part of that equation is the fact that every dollar of this war, virtually every dollar for this war has been borrowed from foreign countries, countries that we're trying to sit across the table from and negotiate better trade deals, trying to negotiate on foreign policy. We can't do that on a fair and level playing field because we owe them

money; not just a little bit of money, but billions upon billions of dollars that we owe foreign countries. Because for this war, we haven't paid for it ourselves. We put it on somebody else's tab, our kids' tab, our grandkids' tab. And for now that money is being held, those promissory notes are being held by foreign governments, further undermining the American economy.

So the chickens are coming home to roost here on energy policy, on health care policy and on the policy of the war that has sucked money out of this country that could have gone to sustain our economy.

Well, we can do things about it. We can do things about it. We can make strides, we can take steps to strengthen our economy, once again.

I want to talk for just a brief moment, Mr. Speaker, about one small bill that we passed today that'll start to get us on the road to fiscal and economic sanity once again.

Regardless of what you think about this war, we have spent wildly and out of control. Now, I'm talking about the \$340 million that we spend every day in Iraq.

Now, I think that had we not gone into Iraq in the first place, had we not stepped foot into this quagmire, we could have spent all of that money here at home to educate our own kids, to build our own schools, to retain our own workers.

But even if we had gone into Iraq, if we had just been paying more attention, as a Congress, as to how money was being spent, we could have had a lot more money to do those things that is now being wasted on the battlefield of Iraq and the battlefield of Afghanistan.

One of the ways in which we are wasting money was that we were making and still are, Mr. Speaker, making people rich off of this war. War profiteering is what it's called, people making their fortunes off of the misery of others. That's happening right here and now in the war in Iraq and the war in Afghanistan.

In the Government Oversight Committee that I sit on as a freshman member, we had one of the most egregious examples of this practice, Blackwater Security before us back in the fall. The CEO of Blackwater Security who's got a billion dollar contract to basically do the work that the U.S. military should be doing in Iraq, Blackwater is basically a paramilitary citizen army setting up camp in Iraq.

They got a huge contract with the United States Government. 90 percent of Blackwater's profits, excuse me. 90 percent of Blackwater's revenue comes from U.S. taxpayers. I mean, they are, essentially, a quasi-government agency. 90 percent of their money comes from the U.S. taxpayers.

So I asked what I thought was a commonsense question at this hearing. I asked Eric Prince, the CEO of Blackwater, I said, listen. You know what? I think it'd be useful for us to

know as a Congress, and for the American public to know how much profit you make, how much salary do you take as a quasi-public government employee?

Mr. Prince said to us, very clearly, it's none of your business. I'm a private company. It seemed outrageous to me. It seemed outrageous to many of my colleagues on the committee.

We pay your salary. We pay 90 percent of all the money that your company takes in, and you're not going to tell us whether you make \$1 million?

Well, he did tell us that; he did tell us that he made over \$1 million, but he wouldn't tell us how much more.

□ 2230

\$2 million? \$3 million? \$10 million? \$20 million?

So I put in a bill, a really simple bill that passed on the floor of the House of Representatives today that said for those private companies that are out there making 80 percent or more of their money from the Federal Government, that have \$25 million or more in contracts, you need to tell the American public how much you are taking out in profit. Tell us how much your most highly compensated officials make. Put some sunlight on how much profit you are making off of this war. Seems like a commonsense measure. In fact, it passed unanimously on the House floor this afternoon.

But it says something about how important the change was that was made in control of this House that it took 5 years of this war for that commonsense, simple bill to make it to the House floor, because when it got here, it resulted in a unanimous vote. But it took Democrats taking control of the House in order for these types of bills, cracking down on war profiteering, to even find the light of day here.

And so, yes, so many of us believe that part of bringing us out of this economic mess, this downturn, this recession, whatever you want to call it, is getting us out of this mess that we have gotten ourselves into in Iraq, turning that money around and spending it right here in the United States of America. But until we do that, one of the most important things we can do for our economy is to make sure that to the extent that we are spending money in Iraq that we're spending it wisely, the right way.

That's part of our responsibility as a Congress. At least when I grew up reading the Constitution, learning about the three branches of government, I was told that the House of Representatives was supposed to be a place that oversaw the executive branch, that made sure that the money of the people that they represented was being spent in the right way. Well, that didn't happen here for a long time.

That oversight role that the Congress was supposed to have on the war, on the policies of the President, kind of vanished for about 7 years. Conveniently, they were there for the years in

which there was a Republican Congress and a Democratic President; a record number of subpoenas were flying out of this place when there was a Democratic President. But when there was a Republican Congress and a Republican President, it wasn't happening so much. I would like to think it was a coincidence, but it probably wasn't.

Now we've got oversight again. And a reasonable amount of oversight. Not overreaching. Not politicizing, not grandstanding. The right amount of oversight. And we passed a bill that was part of that process today.

I couldn't be more pleased, tickled, frankly, to be joined on the House floor by one of the originators of the 30-Something Working Group, Representative MEEK.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Well, I want to thank you so very much. When you say "originators," it makes me feel a little old.

But, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to be joining my great colleague here. He had a wonderful bill on today on the floor. I'm so glad that the Members voted in a unanimous way in making sure we bring about the kind of accountability that the American people have been calling for for a very long time now.

I think Mr. MURPHY has stepped on something, like they say in the country, of being able to bring to light, exactly what are you making? Why are you motivated to be a part of this ongoing war, this kind of the quiet storm that's going on, special interests supporting with commercials and all, the war in Iraq and Afghanistan?

So we do know that the war in Afghanistan is all about 9/11, but the war in Iraq, after 5 years, is about something else.

Former President Bill Clinton puts it this way: If a family next door had a fire, any good neighbor would allow their neighbor to come over and stay at their home and let them sleep on the couch or the extra room for a couple of weeks; and maybe that neighbor may ask, well, can I stay for 2 or 3 months? And nine times out of ten, a good neighbor would allow that person to stay 3 or 4 months. But when it's 5 years later, it's no longer about the fire.

I think that it's important that we look at it from that standpoint, especially as we look at some of these companies that are tenfold going along with, let's keep this war going, let's keep the American people scared about what may happen to them if we were to withdraw the majority of our troops from Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important, and I want to share this with the Members because there was a great debate on this floor today when we talked about this issue of gas prices.

Now it's very ironic that our Republican colleagues on the other side tried to do what we call here on this floor a procedural maneuver, a motion to recommit saying that what are you doing about gas prices in America. Now, this

is very interesting, and I wish I had my chart down here as it relates to profits that Big Oil has made on the Republican watch.

When President Bush became President, Dick Cheney had a special meeting in 2001 with oil companies, and all of a sudden, these oil companies started making these profits that were really unconscionable, unprecedented, never happened before in the history of the Republic. But then again we have Republicans on the floor saying, what is up with these oil prices?

Well, you know, it's very interesting. I want to point the Members, too, because it's nothing about fact versus fiction. Republican leadership wrote the Speaker a letter saying, well, what are you doing about the fuel issue and the price of gas in the United States of America? And me knowing the Speaker and all of us knowing the Speaker, that she sleeps with her fists balled up, especially fighting on behalf of the American people.

And I think it's very, very important, and we realize that this is very serious business, when folks have to pay \$4 out of their pocket to pay for a gallon of gas, I think it's something that we should be paying close attention to.

The Speaker wrote the Republican leadership back in this House and said, It's interesting. We have H.R. 2264 that we put forth on the floor in asking the Department of Justice to take legal action against OPEC-controlled entities for participating in oil cartels that are driving up the price of oil. That's H.R. 2264. How about the Energy Price Gouging Act, which is H.R. 1252, legislation that will reduce the burden of rising gas prices on American families, providing immediate relief to consumers by giving the Federal Trade Commission authority to investigate and punish those that are artificially inflating fuel prices? How about H.R. 5351 with ExxonMobil ranked as the most profitable company in 2007? It's unnecessary for taxpayers to subsidize Big Oil. It goes on and on.

I will pull one more bill out. How about the marketing manipulation provision that was in the Energy Independence Security Act of 2007? It talks about some of the very things that I mentioned.

But this is not the kicker, Mr. Speaker and Members. It's interesting that the Republican leadership would write the Speaker trying to do a Potomac two-step when we're here about the business.

See, the reason why we're in the majority is because Republicans, Independents, Democrats, people that voted for the first time wanted to vote for change, so they voted for the Democrats to take control of this House of Representatives; Republicans who are frustrated, Republican voters who are frustrated with the fact that Republicans were saying one thing and doing another in the back halls of Congress. We have opened this process up when we took the majority here, and that's

what they were looking for, and we will continue.

But the irony of the whole issue is that the Republicans will write a letter to the Speaker as though "we got you on black-and-white paper," and she's not paying enough attention to say, Wait a minute. Let me call you out since you wanted to call me out.

As a matter of fact, the top of the Republican leadership here voted against the issue as it relates to OPEC price gouging, voted against the Price Gouging Act that we passed, the House bill that I called out just a few minutes ago; voted against renewable energy so that we can drive the cost down and compete with petroleum and OPEC companies and other folks that want to raise the price of gas in the United States, and voted against the Energy Security Act.

So I think it's very important for us to look at the hypocrisy of the democracy on the other side of the Republican aisle. Now I won't generalize all of the Republicans in this House because some of them voted with the Democrats on it because they see the light.

Many of their colleagues that were lockstep with the philosophy of the letter that the Republican leadership wrote to the Speaker are now watching me at home on C-SPAN because they made a career decision not to follow the will of the American people and bring about the kind of change that they woke up early one Tuesday morning looking for. This great democracy of ours calls for representation. Not representation of special interests.

And so I'm very pleased with my Democratic colleagues that have voted for our Democratic leadership to be in the leadership to lead us in this new direction that we share with the American people. We didn't just share it with Democrats; we shared it with Republicans, we shared it with the Independents, and we shared it with the American people. We shared it with those that are yet unborn, those that cannot vote right now to give them hope in this government that we're here fighting on behalf of them.

There are veterans right now that are in the sound of my voice, that can hear my voice right now, that have fought for this country and allowed us to salute one flag. And I think it's very, very important, Mr. Speaker, very, very important, Members, very, very important, those congressional staffers, that we do the things that we have to do to make this country better.

These kind of letters, writing back and forth for the sake that I wrote a letter, motions to recommit to say that we're going to call the Democrats out on not doing anything about gas prices; we don't have oil on our hands. They need to go down to 1600 Pennsylvania and check that out. They had the first meeting. They sat down with oil executives. They're the individuals that have the oil background.

And we have a better reason of why we need to change what is going on

right now through using alternative fuel versus telling American people that they're addicted to oil.

So we've got a lot of work to do, and I'm hoping that this bipartisan vote that we took on Mr. MURPHY's bill today is something that's blowing through the air ducts here in Washington, D.C. that Republicans and Democrats can vote together when it makes sense. It makes sense for us to look for alternative fuels.

It makes sense for us to be greener. It makes sense for us to do what we're doing here, Mr. MURPHY and Mr. Speaker, of greening the Capitol. Greening the Capitol, we just started that when the Democrats took control. Mr. MURPHY talked about the fact that this made sense, but it never would have seen the light of day, Mr. Speaker, if it wasn't for Democratic leadership here in this House allowing Mr. MURPHY's bill to make it to the floor so Members can vote in a unanimous way.

Some of my friends on the other side of the aisle, Republicans, they're people, too. And it's very important that we give them the opportunity to vote on good pieces of legislation. And I think it's important that we don't allow anyone to stand in the school house door or the policy door of this Congress and not allow legislation to come to the floor.

Case in point, Mr. MURPHY, if I may. All of the 9/11 recommendations were held back by the Republicans when they were in control. We passed them here in the House of Representatives. To be able to cut student loan interest rates in half on behalf of all of the American people; those that drive Ford, Chevy trucks that are paying somewhere in the neighborhood of \$95 to fill their tank up, to those individuals that are catching the bus that have been green all their lives because they have no alternatives; those individuals that wake up early in the morning that snap, pop these sheets over here in Washington, D.C. and throughout America in these hotels that know what it means to punch in and punch out every day with a 15-minute break in the morning, if they get it, and a 30-minute lunch break, if they get it, those kind of individuals. Those kind of individuals that come home and take off steel-toed boots and sit down and try to recover from the day that they had of working a solid 8 or 12 hours. Those individuals.

Those are the kind of people that we talk to here in this Democratic Congress. Those are the kind of individuals that we allow Republicans to vote on good legislation like Mr. MURPHY brought to the floor today because he just got here and he wants to show his constituents and the American people since they federalized him to come to this floor to represent them, that they will have the opportunity to vote for good legislation. Not only for him to go home but for him to sleep right at night.

So I think it's important, Mr. Speaker. I have no problem with Members

bringing amendments to the floor. I have no problems with Republicans raising the point of how we can make legislation better. But it's one thing, Mr. Speaker, and Members, when you come to the floor and you're the pot calling the kettle black, it's one thing for that to happen.

And one thing that I do like, Mr. MURPHY, about our 30-Something Working Group is that we're in the business of fact and not fiction, that we're in the business of carrying out the will of the American people, because we stood on this floor some 4, 6 hard years saying that if you give us the opportunity to lead, this is what we will do. Democrats, Republicans, Independents, American people, and those yet unborn will appreciate our efforts.

□ 2245

So I think it is important. I'm not upset. If someone says, well, Congressman sounds kind of upset, that guy from Miami. I thought he was kind of easy going, you know, folks from Florida get all excited about things, Sunshine State and all. I'm just glad that God provided me an opportunity to stand upright to be on this floor. And folks in the 17th Congressional District in Florida on one Tuesday morning voted for me to be here to be able to state what I'm saying right now. And so this is not propaganda, it's fact.

I want to thank the Speaker for responding to the Republican leadership on this issue. And I want to thank those Republicans that voted on your very good piece of legislation. I'm glad, because I look forward—I actually sent something out to a couple of friends talking about this today, and I think it's important that we do that.

Mr. MURPHY, I want to thank you for your leadership. I'm glad that we have the opportunity to do the things that we have to do. I know the American people are paying attention to what the presidential candidates are saying. I'm hoping that in the President's closing days, that he has an opportunity to sign and be a part of the good legislation that we're trying to pass here. And I want folks to stay engaged.

Before I close on this segment, I just want to say, because I never hit the floor unless I share with the Members what's happening in Iraq right now, that as of today, April 23, 4,046 Americans have died in Iraq; total number of wounded in action and returned to duty is 6,520; and total number of wounded in action not returning to duty is 3,309. Mr. Speaker, I think every day that should be read into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD so that Members understand their responsibilities and what they have to do.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Well said, Mr. MEEK. And if we can get the legislation that we passed through the House today through the Senate, what will make those numbers even starker is to partner them with the numbers reflecting the millions of dollars that some people out there are making off

this war. Or those numbers of troops that don't come home, or come home with their lives altered permanently, for many of us, I think for all of us, it doesn't seem right that off of that misery someone is making their fortune out there. And that's what the legislation today on the floor sought to do.

Mr. MEEK, you talked about the fact that on a lot of the pieces of legislation that we've been talking about, especially with respect to our efforts here in this New Direction Congress to try to do something about the legacy of rising oil prices that the President has left us, we've had folks on the other side of the aisle join us. I'm just looking at a couple of bills here on our legislation to finally go after these multinational oil cartels that have been price fixing, have been immune from the actions of prosecutors and U.S. courts. Well, we've decided to put them under the jurisdiction of the United States court system and try to go after them for price fixing. And you know what? We did. It looks like we got about 125 Members of the Republican side of the aisle to join us.

When we went after price gougers, we said, let's make it a Federal crime, let's give the Federal Trade Commission the ability to go after those people who would take advantage of rising prices to gouge consumers, to try to get much more than the market would command. We had over 50 Republicans who joined us on that legislation; we wish we had more. We wish we had a greater bipartisan majority for these pieces of legislation that are going forward. But the fact is that we are working together as much as we can. It's not easy to take on these big interests that are making record profits in the oil industry.

The real problem is down the street. The real problem is that we have empowered and entrusted with the reins of the White House and the entire executive branch two oil company executives, two people who made their own fortunes taking profits off of oil prices, taking money out of the pockets of consumers. And those relationships in this administration with the oil industry, I think more so than the relationships that certain Members of this House might have, have really led us to the point where we have trouble advancing good consumer legislation through the full process because the President's threatened vetoes on the anti-oil cartel bill. The President's threatened veto of the price gouging legislation is what holds it up from moving further through the process.

So Mr. MEEK, this is, I think, a building bipartisan majority here in the House. I think we are having some success convincing some of our friends on the other side of the aisle, despite their procedural tricks and maneuvers, that, you know what, these prices don't discriminate based on what party you went down and registered at the town hall and you're getting killed by gas prices and home heating oil prices

whether you're a Republican or whether you're a Democrat. So I think that may account for why we have been able to build some collective support here for these pieces of legislation.

It's really down the road, as you ended your remarks, Mr. MEEK, by suggesting that we've still got time left, right? I mean, everybody's looking at this presidential election saying, you know what, that's where our focus is. Everybody's concerned about this primary and that primary, and the cable news networks don't cover what we do here, they just cover what's said on the campaign trail. Come on, we've got 9 months left of this administration. We've got 9 months more, potentially, of \$3.53 gasoline prices, of similarly high prices to heat your home in the northeast as the winter starts to come around again. We've still got time to do something if we've got a President to come and join us here and make some of the changes we need to make, Mr. MEEK.

There is still time left. We say to our colleagues, don't pay attention to this presidential election at the detriment of the good work that we still can do. Now that the people have got back control of their House, taking it back from the oil companies that have controlled this agenda for so long, we can still make progress. We can still do something about these prices between now and the end of the year, Mr. MEEK.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. If I can, Mr. MURPHY, I think it's important, and I'm going to have to come in for a close because I have to run, but I think that it's important, Mr. Speaker and Members, that we look at it for what it is.

I tell you, a friend of mine from Miami always says, "it is what it is," and I always smile when my friend shares that with me. But I can tell you this, you know, here's President Bush walking with the Saudi king in April of 2005 right here, Mr. Speaker. And I want the Members to make sure that they focus in on that, the very meeting that I was talking about. The White House energy plan was submitted, and individuals had a meeting, and here it is. If you look at the future prices with respect to gasoline, they appear to be headed down. This is what Vice President DICK CHENEY said on 5/20/2001. And as you look at this chart, it started getting worse for the American people, Mr. Speaker and Members, and better for the oil companies. Now, I'm not a Member of Congress with a conspiracy theory, but I'm just saying that it's important that we pay attention to what people are saying and what they are doing.

I want to get that other chart and just kind of talk about what happened to the American people. Let me tell you something, I have to fill up my tank, too. My constituents are feeling this pinch, too. And I just want to make sure that folks understand that this is serious business. When you have folks on fixed incomes and they're not receiving cost-of-living adjustments or

whatever the case may be, because the super majority of Americans—the boss man, like they say in the country—they don't necessarily care about your personal problems, about the fact that you can't fill your tank up, about the fact that your child couldn't pay his or her student loans back and you had to stand in for your student loans. My mother always said in the old school—they used to call a guy in Tallahassee, Florida that owned Lewis State Bank, Mr. Speaker, they called him "Banker Lewis." And back in the old school, some of the grandparents and some of the folks that are probably in their 50s and 60s understand, they say co-sign now, they used to have to go down to the bank and credit union and stand for the person that's looking for the loan. Those days are over. And individuals that are looking to make money in a capitalist society, some care about their employees' personal problems, but some don't. And there's nothing wrong with capitalism, I think profits are a good thing, but I also believe that individuals that went to vote for representation here in this U.S. Congress deserve it. And this is what's happening here.

Look at the per barrel price, 2001. Remember that other chart that I talked about at Mr. CHENEY's meeting—who has a past history in oil, and I guarantee you will have a future in oil—it started off at \$25.88. And you can follow over here. And this is not fiction, this is fact. You start going up, up, up, and now we're at \$119.37 a barrel.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if I start saying that unleaded gas is \$3.70 or \$3.60, there will be many of your constituents and your constituents, Mr. MURPHY, and many constituents of Members of Congress here that will say the Congressman is incorrect. No, it's actually \$3.80 and \$3.90 in some places. And so I think it's important, when we start looking at what small businesses have to pay, what American people have to pay, you know, we have parents that are trying to carpool, get their kids to school. I mean, I live in the urban area. God forbid if I was in a rural area. What happens if I have to drive my soon-to-be 11-year-old son and my 13-year-old daughter 25, 30 miles to school under these circumstances?

And we have four pieces of legislation that this Democratic House has passed and waiting for our Republican colleagues, in many cases, to join us. And especially over in the Senate, Mr. Speaker and Members, where they have the 60-vote rule, you can't even bring things up. So you have oil executives going there saying, stand in the door of the Senate or stand in the door of the House and make sure that this doesn't pass or this amendment doesn't go on. It may be counterproductive to your constituents, but stand in that door. That's the kind of stuff we saw in the 108th Congress. That's the kind of stuff that I witnessed in the 109th Congress. But in the 110th Congress, it's a new day, and the people are looking for the

kind of representation that they voted for.

And I just want to share, and Mr. Speaker, this is not a threat or anything like that because I'm not in that business; I mean, I consider myself a nice guy and I get along with a number of the Members here. As a matter of fact, I don't know of a Member that I'm not on speaking terms with, Democrat or Republican. We all get along. We're colleagues. It's just like you go to work every day, you punch in. There are some people that work in some areas of the office or out on the construction field, but you all say hello to one another, I mean, why don't you? But the only time we separate is when Republican leadership may say, well, we can't be with that because a certain interest doesn't want us to be with that issue; or we have to show the difference between us and the Democrats, even if they're right. Well, back home, for those Americans that know what it means to sit at the dining room table and spread your bills out and figure out how you're going to pay them, those kind of individuals are looking for representation. Those kind of individuals are looking for relief. And they're not necessarily looking for relief for the people that they're paying the bills to, they're looking for the relief for them to help them figure out their dining room problem.

And so when we talk about rolling blackouts, when folks' lights go out, or whatever the case may be, I was in Haiti on Sunday evening and Monday, and I could sit and watch the different parts of Port-au-Prince, Haiti go into the dark because the country is running through economic problems. That happens in America. There are houses on every block in America—not every block, but some blocks in America that the lights are out, not because they went to bed early, it's that they can't afford the dog-gone bill.

And so when we sit here and start playing these games like our Republican leadership tried to do tonight with this whole motion to recommit, saying what are you all doing about gas prices, when turn around three-quarters of them didn't even vote for four of the bills that this Democratic House put forth to give the American people the relief that they called for, and then we're trying to do something about it, and then they try to hijack a good bill and trying to force the Members by saying, well, this Member voted—and we may see this this November, I don't know. Some Members, their motion to recommit, we voted it down, a very bad motion to recommit, ill-advised motion to recommit that some Member that voted for the last four bills to give the American people the relief that they deserve may find it in a political ad sometime soon in their district saying that they voted against some Republican motion to recommit that could not come to reality if it wanted to because it wasn't drafted right, it didn't fit into the bill. But

they had the right to be able to put the motion to recommit. So I think it's important that we break this argument down for the American people so that they understand what's going on here. That will not be rewarded.

Mr. Speaker, I stood here, as sure as my name is KENDRICK MEEK, Mr. RYAN and Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ and others, we stood here on this floor and we told the Members, listen, if you play with the American people, you're going to get stung and it's going to be bad and you're not going to recover from it. Some of you will not be here. Some of you will make career decisions. Check the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, I said it. And guess what? We took the majority. And guess what will happen this time around? Those individuals that know what it means when they sit down to the dining room table and try to figure out how they're going to make ends meet when they put their kids to bed, how are they going to meet the bottom line of their situation. And then we have individuals that are standing in here, that are standing in the policy door of this House and not allowing good legislation to pass to give the American people the relief or trying to stop good legislation from passing to give the American people relief.

□ 2300

They're not going to think if they're Democrat or Republican or Independent. They're going to vote for the people that are fighting for them, and that's us.

So I say to my Republican colleagues respectfully, those individuals that decide to follow leadership, that the track record's not good because I asked them to call some 25 or 30 Members that are now sitting at home reading the actions of Congress in the newspaper when it's dropped in front of their door in the morning. I don't want to be part of that group. I want to be here and have the distinct opportunity to be here in this U.S. House of Representatives that few in this country have had an opportunity to serve in. And I'm proud to be here, and I think every Member should be proud to be here. And I think that should be their first priority when they stand upright and they walk in here and they put this congressional pin on and they walk through the doors because the people expect it and deserve.

So, Mr. MURPHY, your bill today, like they say in some parts of the country, they had no other choice than to vote for it. But I'm glad that we had the leadership in place, Mr. Speaker, to allow that bill to come to the floor because I can tell you a great bill like that never would have seen the day, never would have under the lights, and never would there have been an opportunity for Members to take out their voting card and vote for it because it wouldn't have been allowed to come to the floor because that was something that we didn't do or they didn't do or

they didn't allow us to do. When I say "they," I mean the Republican leadership.

So I don't speak with a silver tongue. I just speak of the truth and reality. And if anyone wants to contradict what I say, you know something, this is a free country. We salute one flag. Folks can get out and say what they want to say. But the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD is on the side of the Democratic leadership, and the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD is on the side of what happened and what did not happen.

So, Mr. MURPHY, I don't feel that we need to even come close to apologizing for anything, and I don't even think that we should be overly offended by the attempts of the past Republican majority to try to push motions to recommit on good pieces of legislation that we are trying to bring to the floor. If I'm thinking politically, I say continue to do those things because we will continue to be in the majority for years and years to come. But the sad part is that the American people lose, and that's the reason why I don't want to promote that. I want us to work together. I want us to work together in a bipartisan way.

So, Mr. MURPHY, I'm so glad to be here to join you here tonight. I'm glad that you anchored the 30-Something tonight. I'm proud to be a part of it. Your constituents should be very proud of the action that you took today, including our entire country. And the good thing about this institution is that historians will look back on this time and will reflect and read about those that were part of the solution and those individuals that were part of just continuing the political madness that many have written about and many Americans have read about. So congratulations.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Mr. MEEK, when you stand on behalf of the people, you can't lose.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Absolutely.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. You can't lose. And I wish it was more complicated. I wish legislating involved a little bit more mystery, but it doesn't. When you've got a choice to stand with regular, average, everyday folks who go to work every day trying to make a living and are playing by the rules or you stand with oil companies who make more money than they ever have, it's not a hard choice. You stand with regular, average, everyday people and the troubles they're going through. If you do that every time, you'll win every time.

Mr. MEEK, it has been a pleasure to share the floor with you today on behalf of the 30-Something Working Group. We thank Speaker PELOSI for giving us once again the opportunity to share some of our thoughts with our colleagues.

ENERGY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ALTMIRE). Under the Speaker's an-

nounced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING) is recognized for 28 minutes, one half of the time remaining.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the privilege to be recognized here on the floor.

I would ask, as a point of information, do you anticipate Democrats coming to the floor for the next hour?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. There is one group following the gentleman.

Mr. KING of Iowa. I appreciate being recognized to address you on the floor of the House, Mr. Speaker.

In the 28 minutes that I have been allocated, I think it's important to address some of the issues that were raised by the gentlemen in the previous hour, the 30-Something Group. That is that, gentlemen, you simply cannot suspend the laws of gravity or the laws of nature, and what goes up must come down. Water runs downhill. And supply and demand control the prices in the marketplace.

I have fought this energy issue on this floor of Congress for some years now. And the lamentations that I'm hearing that come from the gentleman from Florida, his concerns about motions to recommit used to be concerns about the Republican majority. They still remain concerns about President Bush, and they still remain allegations about why we have high gas prices, why it is people can't pay their bills. But the PELOSI majority would suspend the law of supply and demand. There wasn't any discussion about that. It was all about profiteering of the corporations.

Well, the first point I will make is that we have got to have some people producing energy. And let's just say, for example, if Exxon makes \$10 billion a quarter, and that adds up to 40 some billion dollars a year, and if this Congress steps in and says we have a different deal, we want to change the deal, we want to put some windfall profit tax on you and every other American corporation that is now making some profits off their investment in the oil fields, and as this leadership on the Speaker's side has done through the farm bill in particular, which is push to change the deal on our oil leases and renegotiate them because of their belief that the people who signed those contracts, those companies that are providing oil and gas and diesel fuel for us are making too much money, Mr. Speaker, a deal is a deal. And when the Federal Government signs a deal for oil leases and those companies agree to pay royalties on the oil they pump out on a per barrel basis, if the value of that barrel goes up, the Federal Government's deal can't change, just as if the value of the oil goes down. If it costs more to explore and find the oil and more to get it on the market, Uncle Sam is not standing there. Speaker PELOSI is not standing there with her checkbook saying, well, it didn't work out so well for you; so we want to fill in the hole of

the loss that you had. No. A deal is a deal. And when you shake hands on it or you just say, yes, that's what I agreed to, that is by definition a contract. And when you have a congressional piece of legislation, when you have the Federal Government negotiating a lease, you don't change that deal.

And this Congress steps in and makes noises about windfall profits tax. And there are people sitting on the board of directors of these energy-producing companies, these companies where the more energy they produce, the cheaper gas gets for the American people because the law of supply and demand commands the price. Gas gets cheaper when you have more of it produced. And when companies make money, they invest that profit into research and development and exploration. When they do that, that puts more gas and more diesel fuel and more oil on the market, not less. And that keeps the price from inflating or it lowers the price. So if this Congress, led by this Speaker, steps in to change the deal, the people on the board of the directors of those oil-producing companies, if they're logical, rational people and they control capital; so by definition they are logical and rational in my book, some of them are going to start to discuss how they can take those profits out of their oil company and invest them in someplace else where they might not be so vulnerable to a windfall profits tax or so vulnerable to a Congress that has shifted to evermore class envy, evermore resentful about capital returning to the stockholders, and when that happens—the mutual funds, the retirement funds, the 401(K)s, the investment funds of America that are our pension funds that supplement Social Security are many times invested in oil stocks and reserves and futures. The portfolio of America's retirement is what's being attacked by this Congress. And we have to let people and have to let companies make a profit when they invest and take the risk. You cannot suspend the law of supply and demand. But this Congress has. And I think you're off in Pah-la-la-losi Land thinking that you can suspend the law of supply and demand. You cannot.

If we have more energy on the market, the price increase will either slow or it will diminish and be reduced. If we have less energy on the market, the price will go up if the demand also goes up. That is the equation that works here.

So we have high gas prices, and it's pretty easy to figure out why. The American people that are awake tonight, Mr. Speaker, and especially those out on the west coast and in the mountain States, they will understand this equation, I think, fairly simply. There are three reasons that the gas price has been increasing. One of them is the world demand on gas and diesel fuel, on oil. That's why the per barrel crude oil price has gone up. By any